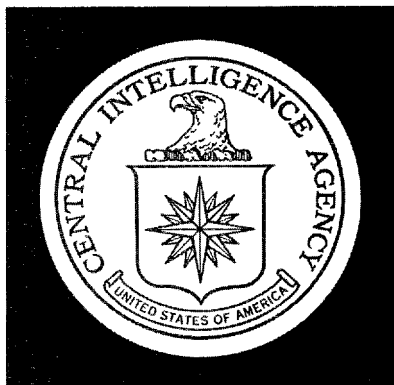


Secret

25X1



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Sino-Vietnamese Frictions

Secret

No 37

14 July 1967

No. 0298/67 *A*

25X1

Approved For Release 2005/01/27 : CIA-RDP79-00927A005900040002-4

Approved For Release 2005/01/27 : CIA-RDP79-00927A005900040002-4

SECRET

25X1

SINO-VIETNAMESE FRICTIONS

Relations between Peking and Hanoi have deteriorated considerably since the period before the fall of Khrushchev in 1964 when China was the only effective ally the Vietnamese Communists had. There is no evidence, however, that their worsened relations have affected the attitude of either party toward the war. The North Vietnamese show no disposition to quit the field and the Chinese appear willing to continue material and technical assistance as long as Hanoi remains determined to prosecute the war.

The problems between Hanoi and Peking arise on the Chinese side from Moscow's steadily increasing support for the Vietnamese, Hanoi's eager acceptance of Soviet aid, and recurrent displays of independence on Hanoi's part. Peking's concern over the possibility that Hanoi might decide to move toward negotiations has introduced new frictions during recent months.

Hanoi's current attitude toward Peking is clearly one of antipathy, distrust, and dismay. Peking's arrogant preachments on the conduct of the war have added to Hanoi's legacy of resentment over historical Chinese imperialism. The mounting confusion of the "cultural revolution" in China has aroused fear and uncertainty among the Vietnamese, who rely heavily on Chinese military aid and food shipments and on Chinese rail lines for transport of Soviet military supplies. In recent months the Vietnamese have probably been further alarmed and angered by Peking's efforts to export the "cultural revolution" by agitation within the ethnic Chinese community in North Vietnam.

Hanoi's Attitude

Hanoi's attitude toward the Chinese Communists has undergone a remarkable shift during the last two and a half years. Prior to the overthrow of Khrushchev, the North Vietnamese clearly regarded China as their primary ally, characterizing their relations as being as close as "lips and teeth." Scarcely an issue of a North Vietnamese publication missed taking

a swipe at "modern revisionism" and no occasion was overlooked to offer praise for Peking. It was clear that this attitude on the part of the North Vietnamese stemmed almost entirely from the fact that China supported, both politically and materially, Hanoi's effort to take over South Vietnam whereas Khrushchev offered little material or political support for the war.

SECRET

Page 1 SPECIAL REPORT 14 Jul 67

SECRET

25X1

Today, however, Hanoi's attitude toward Peking has changed to such an extent that the May issue of the North Vietnamese party journal contained an indirect but unmistakable personal attack on Mao Tse-tung and an across-the-board condemnation of Mao's "cultural revolution" innovations.

This change in heart on Hanoi's part has occurred gradually. Starting in late 1964, when Communist prospects in South Vietnam appeared increasingly promising, Khrushchev's successors felt that Moscow could improve its position within the world Communist movement by providing greater propaganda and material support to Hanoi's war effort. Hanoi responded to the Soviet switch by discontinuing the virulent anti-Soviet propaganda that it had been putting out for months in imitation of Peking and began to treat the Soviets and Chinese on an equal footing. The November 1964 issue of the party theoretical journal Hoc Tap was withdrawn from the newsstands and a bitter article attacking "revisionism" by editor Hong Chuong was replaced by an innocuous substitute.

By March of the following year, US air raids against North Vietnam had begun in earnest and the large-scale build-up of US combat forces was well under way in the South. The North Vietnamese leaders, fully aware of the strains this would put on their relations with Peking, turned to Moscow for increased support. Hanoi has persisted in its policy of maintaining close relations with Moscow ever since, despite blatant

efforts by Peking to persuade the DRV to return to its former antagonistic treatment of the Soviets.

As North Vietnam's air defense requirements have grown, particularly for sophisticated equipment only available from the Soviet Union, the relationship with Moscow has become warmer. Coincidentally, Hanoi's relations with Peking have become increasingly strained. Chinese arrogance in pushing its anti-Soviet line and its insistence that Hanoi follow suit have brought relations to a new low.

North Vietnam has also found itself being lectured incessantly and imperiously by Peking on the dangers of its offer in late January to talk with the US in return for a cessation of the air strikes on North Vietnam. The North Vietnamese are determined to keep open, however slightly, the option of negotiating with the US whenever this tactic appears beneficial to the Communist cause. The Chinese are adamantly opposed to even mentioning the possibility of negotiations. It is not clear to what extent, if any, Hanoi's decision to offer to talk in return for a cessation of the air strikes was prompted by its concern over the growing chaos in China. At any rate, this issue has become a major irritant in Peking-Hanoi relations and seems likely to remain so for some time.

Another area of friction between the two Communist allies is Mao's "cultural revolution." The turmoil occasioned by the excesses

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

of China's internal upheaval has aroused deep apprehensions in Hanoi. The North Vietnamese are probably concerned that clashes inside China could result in the interruption of vital Soviet military supplies sent via China's rail lines. Thus far, however, there is no good evidence that North Vietnam has suffered any serious loss of supplies as a result of rail transportation disruptions in China. Nonetheless, the threat alone is sufficient to sour Hanoi on the "cultural revolution." Several North Vietnamese spokesmen have recently been quoted by foreigners as having denigrated the Chinese "cultural revolution" and made clear Hanoi's contempt for its excesses.

North Vietnamese antipathy for the "cultural revolution" was undoubtedly heightened in recent months by the activities of Chinese Communist personnel in North Vietnam. In February 1967, Chinese Embassy personnel in Hanoi demonstrated outside the Soviet Embassy. Moreover, the "cultural revolution" is being spread throughout the Chinese community in North Vietnam, [REDACTED]

The North Vietnamese have reacted to these Chinese moves

by dispersing demonstrators, by informing the Chinese Embassy that anti-Soviet statements by the Chinese community in Vietnam will not be permitted, and by using Cambodia rather than China as an entry point into North Vietnam for foreigners. In addition, in recent months the North Vietnamese party has issued a number of lengthy documents designed to instruct party members on the dangers inherent in the "cultural revolution," although it is never mentioned by name. In particular, the party leadership has made certain that everyone in North Vietnam understands that the party will not tolerate any competition for power--an unmistakable reference to Mao's reliance on the Red Guards to attack the regular party apparatus in China.

The View From Peking

Peking's approach to the Vietnamese war and its attitude toward North Vietnam have, from the outset, been more than usually cynical. All along the Chinese have clearly attempted to keep the conflict a battle by proxy--to be fought at minimum risk and expense to China. Given this situation, recurrent friction within the Sino-Vietnamese partnership has been inevitable.

The Chinese have been irritated repeatedly by displays of independence by the North Vietnamese and by Hanoi's continued acceptance of massive assistance from the Soviets. From time to time Peking has shown uneasiness over the possibility that North Vietnamese resolve might falter

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

and that Hanoi might decide to move toward the conference table. It seems likely that concern on this score lies behind the indications of mounting Chinese displeasure with Hanoi since the beginning of the year.

25X1

by belaboring the Soviets for taking a similar stand on the negotiations question.

This criticism was most explicit in an authoritative People's Daily article by "Observer" broadcast on 20 February. "Observer" charged that the Soviets were aiding and abetting the US "peace plot" and conspiring with the "imperialists" to force Hanoi into negotiations if the US stopped bombing North Vietnam. The Chinese once again underscored their own position that a solution in Vietnam depended on the complete removal of US forces, not on termination of the bombing.

Peking reacted to the meeting between North Vietnamese representatives and UN Secretary General Thant in Rangoon on 2 March with chilly silence and responded in the same way to Hanoi's release of the February correspondence between President Johnson and Ho Chi Minh on 21 March. Publication of this exchange of letters pointed up the existence of differences between Peking and Hanoi on the question of negotiations.

North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh's offer to open talks with the US in return for a cessation of bombing must have added to Peking's misgivings. What the Chinese may have said privately to the Vietnamese about Trinh's moderate-sounding statement is not known, but Peking pointedly avoided any public mention of the widely publicized offer. At the same time, the Chinese made a vigorous though indirect attack on Hanoi's position

Although this sort of implicit criticism of North Vietnam's tactics on the question of negotiations has been muted in recent months, China's hostility to bilateral talks between Hanoi and Washington on any basis has not diminished. The recent Glassboro summit talks between President Johnson and Soviet Premier Kosygin provided a most timely focus for underscoring Peking's attitude. In a familiarly oblique reminder to

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

the Vietnamese of its continuing concern over this issue, the Chinese charged that the summit talks had proved that the US and the Soviet Union would continue their attempts to "induce peace talks through a bombing pause on the Vietnam question."

Increased US military pressure on North Vietnam in late April produced little more than a pro forma response from Peking. It took the Chinese five days to react to strikes against targets in the Haiphong area and Peking's Foreign Ministry statement, finally broadcast on 25 April, was a replay of earlier cautious statements condemning the US and promising general Chinese "support" for the Vietnamese. The Chinese Foreign Ministry statement issued on 21 May following stepped-up US raids in the Hanoi area took the same position and emphasized the ability of the Vietnamese to defeat the enemy on their own.

This response reflects the mixture of caution with regard to the US and annoyance with Hanoi which has been increasingly evident in Chinese statements during the past 12 months. Peking's sensitivity was underscored by the quick Chinese repudiation of newsman Simon Malley's alleged interviews with Chou En-lai and other Chinese leaders. The first in Malley's series of articles appeared on 14 May. On 16 May NCNA categorically denied that Malley had been given an interview by Chou or "any other Chinese leaders" and declared that his articles were an "out-and-out fabrication put out with ulterior motives."

The reason for Peking's prompt move to undercut Malley and to discredit his series of articles is unclear, but it seems likely that his sensational treatment of Chinese intentions with regard to the Vietnamese war in his first article triggered Peking's move. In reporting remarks attributed to Chou En-lai and to "cultural revolution" leader Chen Po-ta, Malley put forward a new contingency under which China would enter the war openly. He claimed Chou had told him that if the USSR and the US were about to arrange a settlement that would betray the Vietnamese, China would send in troops. Malley quoted Chen Po-ta as saying, "We will never permit such a peace settlement to be imposed on the Vietnamese people. And if this means that we have to face war, we will do so with pride and confidence."

Peking probably was concerned because the statements imputed to Chou and to Chen appeared to increase the Chinese commitment to enter the war directly, thus reversing the steady movement toward greater caution in Peking's position which began in the fall of 1965. At the same time, the alleged statements raised for the Vietnamese the specter of unilateral Chinese intervention whether Hanoi desired it or not. Peking's second denunciation of the Malley series on 28 May--12 days after the first--charged explicitly that the articles were part of a "political plot" by the US and the USSR to sow discord between Peking and Hanoi. The fact that the Chinese made this additional effort to blacken

SECRET

SECRET

25X1

Malley suggests that the series had created problems in a sensitive area of Chinese foreign relations, and that Peking is anxious to minimize friction and strain in ties with the Vietnamese.

Outlook

The strains in Sino-Vietnamese relations seem likely to continue and may grow worse. So long as both partners agree that the war in the South should go on, however, there is little prospect that frictions between Hanoi and Peking will reach a critical level.

The Vietnamese Communists regard Peking as a valuable if overbearing ally, and the source of irreplaceable material and political support. They recognize, moreover, that the Chinese control the transportation routes over which the flow of sophisticated weapons moves from the USSR to North Vietnam. Hanoi, therefore, has been careful to avoid open criticism of the Chinese and to keep attacks on Mao implicit rather than direct. So long as China continues to support the war effort and makes no

major moves to meddle in Hanoi's domestic affairs, the Vietnamese will probably continue to follow a policy of maintaining correct relations with Peking on as cordial a level as possible but refusing to accept Chinese advice if it runs counter to what Hanoi regards as its own interests.

The Chinese are not entirely pleased with the North Vietnamese for a variety of reasons but on balance Peking probably regards the present situation in Vietnam as reasonably good. The Chinese have repeatedly asserted, and probably still believe, that time is on the Communist side. They apparently think that if the war can be kept going long enough, the combined domestic and foreign political pressures on the US Government will become insupportable. Accordingly, the key element for Peking is to keep the war going. As long as the Vietnamese are willing to stay in the fight the Chinese can be expected to give them material assistance and technical support as needed--and to put up with a great deal of ideological or nationalistic backwardness on the part of Hanoi.

25X1

SECRET

Secret

Secret